

Tape 12

Side A, 7/8 - 15/16

11 January 1979

REMINDER MEMORANDUM

Talk to Inman about his telemetry analysis and how it compares with OWI.

Xerox noted

Cord Meyer

Cuba, Iran Present Difficult Options

WASHINGTON

The Soviets blurred their list of priorities by provoking potential confrontations in Iran and Cuba at a moment when they had seemed bent on improving the prospects for a new SALT agreement.

President Carter's top policymakers know they cannot shrug off the implications of either the Brezhnev statement on Iran or the MiG-23s in Cuba. Both developments may lead, if allowed to stand unchallenged, to dramatic enlargements of Soviet power. To ignore them will be to concede weakness.

So the doves and hawks in the Carter councils agree that if the Soviet MiGs are discovered to be attack bombers with a nuclear capability the President will need to do what is necessary to get them withdrawn. There is, however, no consensus on the wisest response regarding Iran because there is not much the United States can do to prop up the shah beyond offering verbal support.

The concern over the Brezhnev warning against any American intervention in Iran is that it implied an extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Kremlin's 1968 assertion of authority over Eastern Europe, which served to justify the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Brezhnev seemed to be saying that the U.S. has no right to assist an ally in any country bordering on the Soviet Union, while at the same time, as in Afghanistan, the Russians assert the right to establish satellite regimes through covert support to local communists.

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The Russian warning came on the heels of a Carter TV interview in which the President was overly generous in absolving the Soviets of any responsibility for the shah's troubles. He was also fairly flat in denying any intention to intervene, but Brezhnev responded that Carter had kept the right to intervene "under an appropriate excuse."

There was an echo of John Kennedy's rhetoric in the Cuban missile crisis in Brezhnev's taut warning that this is "a matter affecting the security interests" of the Soviet Union.

But while the U.S. government permitted communists to come to power in Cuba after Fulgencio Batista fell, Brezhnev is plainly bent on insuring that American influence does not fill the vacuum that will

occur if the shah falls in Iran.

The Carter officials have no counterploy at hand. The shah has stated he will accept no external assistance.

The moderate opposition is so disorganized and so much under the influence of the extremist Moslem clergy that compromise on a constitutional monarchy seems beyond reach. Covert action is no longer really available as an instrument of policy, given the number of congressional committees that have to be consulted.

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Keenly aware that his resolve is being tested, Carter is pressing his officials to develop strong options in both situations. He is holding back in Cuba until intelligence clearly determines that the MiGs are ground attack planes that can be wired for nuclear weapons.

The accumulating evidence suggests that they are, but Carter wants to be absolutely certain.

If this certainty develops, Carter is expected to follow the precedent set by Kennedy when he demanded and got the withdrawal from Cuba of the IL-28 bombers, planes one-third as fast as the MiGs. The military threat of these planes is seen as less significant than the political consequences of opening a breach in the 1962 agreement.

The Soviets could be expected to work from then on to widen the breach. The reaction in the U.S. Senate would be fatal to the SALT II treaty.

If the Soviets manage to demonstrate that the balance of power has shifted by defying the withdrawal demand, the American people will inevitably insist on new momentum in the competition for military supremacy.

It was their need to back down in Cuba in 1962 that convinced the Russians to undertake their massive military buildup. The Soviet negotiator, V. Kuznetsov, put their intentions bluntly to his American counterpart, John J. McCloy, when he accepted the American terms: "We'll live up to this agreement, but we'll never be in this position again."

The danger 16 years later is that another confrontation over Cuba will bring fresh impetus to the arms race.

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U.S. officials mull Iranian military intervention

By CHRISTOPHER PAINE
Pacific News Service

The gathering storm of protest against Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi's regime in Iran has again raised the sensitive specter of U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf.

While carefully avoiding any hints that the U.S. is considering intervention, sources in the Pentagon and defense community said the implications of disorder are "serious" as regards U.S. interests. Most of these sources would not rule out the possibility of direct U.S. military action in Iran.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

Asked about the possible use of a U.S. special Middle East strike force in Iran, a Pentagon spokesman said, "That gets into contingency planning which we won't discuss, but the secretary of defense has said that we are manned, equipped and trained to intervene if necessary in the Persian Gulf area to protect U.S. interests." "The President has said that it would be inappropriate to intervene in what is essentially an internal disorder in a country, but we do have contingency plans to protect both American lives and equipment," the Pentagon spokesman said.

QUICK REACTION FORCE

The Carter administration has been extremely sensitive to any charges that it is prepared to militarily intervene in Iran. When Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev made such accusations last week, the Carter administration took the unusual step of issuing a high-level denial on Sunday.

Brezhnev had said in a Nov. 19 Pravda article that "what puts one on guard [against the possibility of military intervention by the U.S. in Iran] is that officials of the states concerned actually do not deny such reports."

After conferring with the President and other top officials, Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance responded later that day that the U.S. "does not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of any country...."

The facts, however, speak otherwise. Air Force Secretary John C. Stetson announced last April that the Air Force would contribute to a planned Persian Gulf quick reaction force consisting of one Marine and two Army divisions with a total of about 100,000 troops.

Stetson described the U.S. obligation to Iran as "a good deal more than moral," a reference to a 1958 agreement which calls upon the United States to "take appropriate action, including the use of armed forces," to assist Iran in resisting "aggressors from any country controlled by international Communism."

MILITARY CAPABILITY

According to Dale R. Tahtinen, the assistant director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies at Washington's American Enterprise Institute, "If it gets so bad that the shah needs outside help, it's going to take a lot more than a small strike force; certainly a lot more than an Entebbe-type force."

"Even if they wanted to," said Tahtinen, "I doubt that the U.S. has the capability in a very short term situation to deliver the kind of force that would be necessary if the situation in Iran were that bad."

But according to James Chase, managing editor of the Council on Foreign Relations' prestigious journal, *Foreign Affairs*, "There are sound reasons for making clear that the U.S., though not so militarily predominant as it was at the time of the 1958 Lebanon landings, retains strike forces tailored to deal with limited military contingencies in a rapid manner."

"In an area of vital resources," he added, "a military capability is not a bad thing to have." Chase emphasized that the ability of the U.S. to intervene in its own interests is important quite apart from the need to counter Soviet moves in a given area.

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